Research on Local Government's Coping Strategy against Internet Public Opinion Crisis

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Keywords: Local government; Internet public opinion crisis; Coping strategy

Abstract: With respect to specific development and solution to current internet public opinion, as various hotspots and difficulties can't be efficiently solved and managed in time, many crises are not timely eased and side effects on society will be gradually aggravated. Consequently, in internet era, it is of vital importance for local governments to effectively guide internet public opinions. On the basis of concretely analyzing related concepts and connotation of internet public opinion crisis, the thesis studies on several aspects like government's cognition and system construction, so as to comprehensively research on local government's coping strategy against internet public opinion crisis and summarize existing issues, meanwhile, optimize and sort out strategies from multiple perspectives and levels.

1. Introduction

With the development and application of information technology, network information technology plays an increasingly significant role in modern society.1 In regard to public opinion, based on numerous information and rapid spread speed on internet platform, communication and strong destructiveness in public opinion, many issues about social public opinion are being consistently complicated, what's worse, some simple social issues may swiftly become hotly searched, and regional issues are gradually enlarged to social issues on internet information platform.

The emergence of new media has stimulated people's right to express, so as to control the formation and development of internet public opinion, besides, local governments may confront with tests on their ability to cope with public opinion and governance. China is now undergoing a transitional period of economic development, contradicts and paradoxes among various groups of social interests overlap, so as to push social pubic opinion to an easily contradicted stage. Once some common social events are being artificially intensified or maliciously exaggerated, with the help of internet information technology and platform, they may be gradually expanded and even trigger strongly destructive events of internet public opinion crisis. Therefore, it has become an important task for all governmental departments to rationally and efficiently guide them.

2. Brief Introduction to Internet Public Opinion Crisis

Internet public crisis belongs to social public opinion crisis, from the aspect of performance and content, generally speaking, internet public opinion crisis is a kind of negatively social effects brought by improper statements and actions of governmental departments and related pubic figures, it will significantly impact on public opinion and emotion which may rapidly spread through internet information media, and then drive some local public opinion events to transform into social public opinion events. During this process, governmental departments are confronting with huge pressure from public opinion and forced to make crisis response.

In January, 2018, CNNIC released the 41st *Statistical Reports on Internet Development in China*, it shows that the amount of netizen in China has reached 772 million, internet popularizing rate reached 55.8% and the number of mobile netizens reached 753 million at the end of December,

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2017. Corresponding internet events of public opinion has been significantly promoted in popularity. Currently, public opinion hotspots are vividly described as spam. Relying on mobile internet, information sharing and opinion exchange like Weibo, Wechat and news client have become the cradle and platform of social public opinion.

Table 1 Ten Internet Public Opinion Events in 2017 Unit: thousand

Ranking	Event	Journal	News	Forum	Blog	Weibo	Wechat	APP	Popularity
1	Opening of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China	76.5	550.7	42.3	3.9	66.3	314.6	161	97.03
2	Wolf Warriors 2 popularity	6.3	247.1	97.5	14	356.6	174	59.3	91.24
3	In the Name of People hit	14.3	303.9	126.8	15.1	147.6	191.6	15.7	91.09
4	Confrontation between China and India in Donglang	4.6	150.5	24.9	20.9	44.7	158.8	16.4	85.56
5	Establishment of Xiong'an New Area	6.5	194.1	41.2	17.7	13.8	63.7	8.2	83.57
6	Case of Yu Huan	3.9	100.3	33.3	5.5	69.4	114.7	5.2	82.73
7	Luo Yixiao Event	2.1	143.8	30.5	9.4	9.7	161.9	11.9	81.65
8	School district house and policy of equal right for home tenants and owners	4.1	137.3	8.6	4.8	8.9	50.7	14	80.63
9	Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation	7.2	118.9	11.9	9.1	6.3	64.4	3.4	80.29
10	Bicycle sharing	5.1	134.9	11.6	3.5	6.2	48.3	9.1	80.09

From internet public opinion and related content in table 1, as China gradually embraces the world, netizens' attitude of being a member of great power has formed, and patriotic enthusiasm further aggregates. Pressure from anti-corruption public opinion has somewhat dropped, negative public opinion brought by official corruption merely exists and can no longer irritate public emotion.

Grand topics related to social system fade, and public opinion caused by extreme cases decreases. Netizens' sense of substitution and empathy intensify, people usually takes advantage of some hot issues to express collective anxiety over deep-seated social issues like class consolidation, and then resonate.

3. Analysis of Reasons That Fail Local Government's Strategy against Internet Public Opinion Crisis Cognitive Bias

3.1. Weak Consciousness of Internet Public Opinion Crisis.

In all these years, internet public opinion crises consistently occur in each region, what's worse, some crises which can be avoided may worsen. In conclusion, grass-root staff lack of awareness and knowledge about internet crisis and development.

3.2. Lack of Public Management Awareness in Modern Society.

As for various kinds of internet public opinion crises, in China, many governmental departments and institutions possess public administrative management method and awareness that still stay at traditional implements and form. Especially, with regard to grass-root governmental institution, for they are unable to witness internet public opinion crisis in occurrence and its damage on society, and even search for proper ways to release.

4. System and Mechanism Bias

4.1. Incomplete Early Warning Mechanism.

In China, although many governmental departments have set up various kinds of comprehensive emergency management institutions and organizations, and roundly intensified solution to diversified social crises, most of these organization apply flat management method, however, many affairs and responsibilities can't be timely implemented at grass-root level. Meanwhile, many office staff basically lack of internet literacy and related working capacity, so they may face with difficulty in adapting to increasingly complicated development of internet public opinion, consequently, all these crises in public opinion are unable to be timely prevented and solved.

4.2. Insufficient Supervision on Public Opinion.

Along with the development of local government and improvement of governmental work, significant promotion and improvement are realized in talents allocation, structural establishment or technological application. Whereas, in China, researches on internet ethics and internet structure are incomplete, economic interests' drives, and internet legislation lags, internet public opinion can't be effectively supervised and managed in time in China, so supervision may confront with severe defection.

4.3. Feeble Guidance on Public Opinion.

At present, as for local government's capacity of guiding internet public opinion crisis, there exist some disadvantages: first of all, governmental websites and official forums are old in form and backwards in content, so click rate is low, meanwhile, complete and active site of internet public opinion guidance is difficult to be set up. Secondly, many local governments are unable to rationally apply internet means to manage and guide public opinion, at the same time, the value of internet information technology has not been fully deployed, and local governments have neither rationally communicated with netizens nor realized the development of advanced governmental management method like public affair participation on internet. Thirdly, they have not aware of the importance of cultivating internet public opinion leaders, and then lost their initiative in internet public opinion guidance.

4.4. Imperfect Crisis Response Plan.

It is of great necessity to realize rational and effective crisis response plan. For there exist a diversity of internet public opinion crises, they vary in their birthplace, extent of injury and content, plan construction shall be specifically targeted, in addition, as China covers a wide area and includes distinctive local customs, a reasonable and perfect crisis emergency can't be formed in a short time, so local governments in all regions are passive in crisis prevention and treatment.

4.5. Media Management System and Linkage Mechanism are yet to be strengthened.

Internet public opinion crisis is harmful and strongly associated, so it's necessary to reasonably adopt resource in other aspects to effectively prevent and treat it. However, local governments are not able to manage and adopt these media and diversified resources in an effective way, mainstream media is unable to present required function and value in public opinion guidance, and many influential social media and public have not been effectively organized, so as to lead public opinion crisis to a passive dilemma.

5. Coping Behavior Bias

5.1. Intentionally Block the Passage of Information.

In many areas, once any emergent incidents occur, or any regional public crisis happen, firstly, governments may not consider to guide public opinion, on contrary, they think about blocking information, avoiding public and even upper management departments from learning about the situation, what's worse, some officials directly adopt their rights to wantonly interfere with these public opinions, or delete posts or shut down website to maliciously block public opinion information.

5.2. Blindly Refute and Deny.

For other reasons or purposes, some local governments may shirk responsibilities. When internet public opinion occurs, they refuse to reveal to the public and chose to refute or deny, therefore, many local governments have already lost credibility in public.

5.3. Ostrich Mentality.

Ostrich mentality means escape. Some local governments avoid to discuss about pubic opinion, others may directly choose their own opinion to blindly misguide public, and some local governments still make no reply no matter how hard the media has publicized.

5.4. Slow Response and Perfunctoriness.

Although some local governments may reply to public opinions, only few words are used to answer in a perfunctory way or evasive way.

6. Advice on Local Government's Coping Strategy Against Internet Public Opinion Crisis Cognitive Coping Strategy

6.1. Set up Awareness of Internet Public Opinion Crisis.

Foremost, government departments and staff should confront with internet and know about the value and efficacy of internet means and technology, so as to reasonably deploy them in work. Secondly, in the background of information age, governments and working staff have to apply internet means to connect with netizens, so as to listen to their voices in time and timely persuade them, meanwhile, public may be stimulated to participate in constructing socialism and harmonious society. Thirdly, by comprehensively promoting one's own awareness, and taking advantage of internet information technology and means, various kinds of public opinion crises can be avoided, improper statements can be timely persuaded, and distinctive managements on public opinions can thus be developed.

6.2. Promote Internet Accomplishment of Local Officials.

Firstly, working staff in all local governments should be trained with internet knowledge to promote their judgment and guidance on internet public opinion. Secondly, working staff in governments should be organized and guided to cultivate internet- informationized working and living habits, so as to consistently deepen their understanding about internet information technology and means. Thirdly, they should strengthen understanding about networking, and be cultivated with internet governance thoughts and awareness, so as to take advantage of internet information means to optimize administrative management method and effect.

7. System and Mechanism Coping Strategy

7.1. Strengthen on Internet Public Opinion Guidance, and Perfect Crisis Prevention and Resolving Mechanism.

Once internet public opinion crisis occurs, government will effectively organize authoritative experts and internet public opinion leaders, based on their credibility and authority, netizens' statements and thoughts will be time guided, besides, with the help of strongly persuasive articles, facts of public opinions will be clarified, so as to effectually lead public opinion and solve crisis in time.

7.2. Set up Coping Mechanism of Crisis Linkage.

By effectively organizing and mobilizing organizational structure and resources of government's supervision and early warning on internet public opinion, a complete series of internet crisis coping system can be constructed. In this system, early warning will be focused on internet public opinion crisis, so as to effectively judge and summarize related content, meanwhile, by effectually screening on the basis of different regions, extents and scopes, and then releasing crisis prediction, practicable and rational solution shall be rapidly made, so as to timely solve coming internet public opinion crisis.

7.3. Perfect Crisis Contingency Plan.

Local governments at all levels can refer to *General Contingency Plan for Public Emergencies in China*, classify crises for management. By setting up a big-data platform for processing internet public opinion information, forces of different grades and scopes participate in dealing with crises of various grades and categories, and in accordance with category and grade, related resources and forces will be mobilized to solve crises.

7.4. Accelerate Internet Legislation.

Internet freedom and easy uncontrollability make citizens' freedom of internet political participation and maintenance of internet safety and public opinion normal order as a pair of paradoxes. It is an efficient method to solve this paradox by accelerating internet legislation and perfecting citizen's internet political participation system, but it shall be noticed that an equilibrium shall be found between renovating internet chaos and ensuring internet expression, which also attracts attention from internet governance in the future.

8. Behavior Coping Strategy

8.1. Behavior Coping Strategy in Crisis Incubation Period.

In the first place, staff should be trained to be adept at discovering public opinion. Confronting with numerous internet public opinion information, main officials and related full-time staff should adopt highly political sensitivity and perception to have macroscopic analysis, and then search for and find public opinion from the aspect of politicians. Meanwhile, standard of public opinion early warning shall be formulated based on different levels like red, orange, yellow, blue, green and so on, so as to effectively deal with public opinion and make plan.

Secondly, dynamic tracking can be developed through advanced informationalized means like big data, cloud computing and artificial intelligence. By collecting events and topics that may possibly cause public opinion crises, and then combining with unique variation rule of internet public opinion to strengthen on dynamic tracking, so as to carry out scientific analysis and research. Eventually, by giving early warning in time, measures should be taken to decrease possibility and suddenness of crises.

8.2. Behavior Coping Strategy in Crisis Explosion Period.

Establish authoritative platform of information issuing platform, like setting up pages for special subjects and news spokesmen. By releasing authoritative information on pages of special subjects, citizens can meet with their demands of internet true information, restrain false information and rumor from spreading internet. Meanwhile, they can interact with each other, discuss about preventive measures against crises, so as to promote netizens' participation, correctly guide the development of internet public opinion and convert crises into a positive dies. As for major emergencies, governments should timely release authoritative information to the public. In March, 2017, General Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China explicitly requests in *2017 Key Points in Public Governmental Affairs* that, as for significantly important events and important events, authoritative information shall be released within 5 hours and press conference shall be held within 24 hours.

8.3. Coping Strategy in Crisis Recovery Period.

Online events involve with ideological controversies, related topics manifest, intensify and tends to go offline. Internet governance is unprecedentedly reinforced, the golden age of we-media has declared an end. First of all, it's necessary to summarize experiences to lead public to rationally rethink. The end of crisis doesn't mean the end of governmental work. After coping with crises, governments at all levels should timely summarize experience, report treatment to netizens on specific information platform, and then guide netizens to rethink in a rational way. It then comes to self-correction and image recovery. On the one hand, crisis events make government credibility suffer from doubts and damage its image, on the other hand, it brings about chances to governments to communicate with public and introspect. As crisis ends, government has to complete self correction and image recovery, set up mechanism of cadre correction and accountability, based on consciously promoting public management ability, government may consistently improve governance level and effectively maintain governmental credibility and good image.

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